



of a date prior in time to September 26, 2001 and that I diligently worked with patent counsel toward filing a patent application with the United States Patent and Trademark Office from a time at least as early as just prior to September 26, 2001 up until the filing date of the Application on December 21, 2001.

7. To establish the date of conception of the invention prior to September 26, 2001, I provide evidence in the form of a Patent Disclosure – Invention Description attached hereto as Exhibit "B" (dates and some personal information have been redacted from Exhibit "B"). The invention disclosure was prepared in the United States of America, where the invention was also conceived, prior to September 26, 2001. The Patent Disclosure – Invention Description describes the invention of the above-noted patent application, and specifically includes *inter alia* a description of various embodiments of a bonus game involving a multiple-choice answer trivia games played among players at qualifying gaming machines, including teams formed from two or more players.

8. To establish diligence from a time prior to September 26, 2001 up to the filing date of the Application on December 21, 2001, I assert, upon knowledge, information, and belief, that during the period as early as just prior to September 26, 2001 up until the filing date of the Application on December 21, 2001, approximately 38 hours of attorney time was spent on preparation of the application, and that the period also included review of the draft application by me, as well as final editing and submission to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office by the filing attorney, Joseph Walkowski.

9. All statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or patent issued thereon.

April 17 2006  
Cannon/  
Date

/Lee E  
Lee E. Cannon

01-01-029-01



## Patent Disclosure – Invention Description

*Voyage I – Concept CC*

Lee Cannon –

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### SUMMARY

A gaming system is disclosed which includes a competitive and/or collaborative bonus game wherein player skill or strategy is used to win the bonus game. This invention attempts to broaden the scope of acceptable skill, strategy, and knowledge-based games, primarily through competitive bonus games wherein the players are competing against each other rather than the house.

### 1.0 DESCRIPTION

TITLE: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR COMPETITIVE BONUS GAMES BASED UPON STRATEGY OR SKILL

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS;

Figure 1 Trivia Quiz Show Bonus Game Flowchart

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Slot machines have long been a significant facet of the gaming industry. Video versions of slot machines are now very popular. A current enhancement to this market is the addition of bonus games to the slot machines. A bonus game is a secondary game that most typically will execute if the player achieves a certain outcome on the base game. In many cases that bonus game is a singular event in that the play changes to the bonus game when a certain base game outcome is achieved and the bonus game is then played to completion. In some cases the bonus game is a more sequential event in that the progress through the bonus game is determined by continued play in the base game.

A new inventive arena being disclosed by Anchor is that of a competitive bonus game. Here, the bonus game is not associated with an individual gaming machine but instead is linked to multiple gaming machines. Further, the player is not simply playing against the machine in the bonus game but is competing against other players for the prizes.

One potential class of competitive bonus games is those disclosed in Anchor's Win-A-Wager application. Here there is a competitive bonus event into which players can qualify or win wagers. Following the traditional lines of most standalone games, the bonus games that might be incorporated in such a system are based purely upon chance, independent of player skill.

People by nature are very competitive. A significant degree of competition can be catered to by such bonus games of chance as might be evidenced by the popularity of slot tournaments. There are, however, many people would prefer to compete based, at least partially, upon their own level of skill or knowledge.

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There is an inherent problem providing stand-alone gaming machines based heavily upon skill, strategy, or knowledge. This deals with the dependence of the house hold percentage upon the skill level of the player. To a degree this is present in video games such as poker and blackjack. A skilled player can expect a larger payback than an unskilled player. However, in these games, the optimum skill level (with rare exceptions) will not yield an expected payback percentage in excess of 100%. Further an acceptable skill level is fairly readily achieved by the majority of the players such that the mediocre player still have a reasonable expected payback percentage.

As the significance of the skill aspect is increased, so does the impact on the expected payback percentage for the skilled versus the mediocre player. Major regulatory and fairness issues are at hand in many jurisdictions when the house stake is so dependent upon the skill level.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

The basic concept of this invention is a competitive bonus game where players win qualification to participate. The system consists of multiple gaming machines linked to a common bonus game controller. The bonus game controller can be either independent device or integrated into one or more of the gaming machines.

Most typically, a given game outcome will qualify the player or will provide the player the opportunity to qualify for the next round of bonus game competition. The act of qualifying most typically adds a predetermined number of credits to a bonus pool in the shared bonus game. This bonus pool is used to award the winner or winners in the bonus round competition. Thus the award becomes pari-mutuel and the house is not impacted by the skill level of the players.

If a given gaming machine wins multiple qualifications into a given bonus game round, that may increase their stake in the competition. Thus, if they win, they might win two or more shares of the pari-mutuel pool. Alternatively, the subsequent qualifications might be held in reserve for subsequent rounds. Or, these subsequent outcomes might become normal award categories once that gaming machine has qualified. A further option with certain types of bonus games is that they win additional entries into the bonus game.

While this invention is not specific to this bonus game, a representative bonus games for envisioning the concepts is a multiple-choice trivia game.

The information for the bonus game (if required) might be downloaded from a host computer either in batch or on demand.

A variety of means could be used to start the actual play of the bonus round. The bonus round might start:

- when there is a predetermined number of qualifiers
- when the bonus pool reaches a predetermined level
- when a predetermine number of base games over all of the linked gaming machines have been played
- at fixed or random time intervals
- in response to some game outcome

In the case of a game such as the trivia game, the trigger of the game might pose a question to each of the players at qualifying gaming machines. All gaming machines may get the same question or they may get different questions. The bonus pool could be split among those that answer correctly. Alternatively, the entire award or at least a larger share could go to the player that responds correctly the fastest. If there are no correct answers, the pool could carry over to the next round.

As a second approach, the qualifying trigger could give an immediate play of the bonus game entry. In the case of the trivia game, it might pop up a single question. Correctly answering the question might give

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the player some number of points (different questions might have different number of points) or might move the player further up a ladder. Incorrectly answering might or might not penalize the player such as by taking away points or moving him down the ladder. Not answering might have no impact on the points or ladder position. The bonus round might run for a predetermined time period or through a predetermined number of questions or until somebody reaches a set number or points or ladder position. The award is then given to that player or those players with the highest number of points or highest ladder position.

In the case of a strategy based or puzzle solving game, each qualifying outcome might earn the player a single move in the that game. The first player to complete the game wins the pool.

There might be multiple bonus games in progress simultaneously where the player can select which game to participate in. A simple version of this might be trivia games with multiple skill levels. A skillful player might chose a higher skill level on the rationale that there will be fewer successful participants and thus fewer people to split the pool with.

The different bonus games or skill levels might be available freely at the player choice, might require earning the right to enter (e.g. accumulating enough points or winning at lower skill levels), or it might be based on specific game outcomes.

The bonus pool might have conditions on its distribution and portions of it might carry over into a progressive jackpot. For example, the amount paid out may be dependent upon whether or not a majority of the players answered the trivia question correctly. E.g. it might not pay if more that 25% of the qualifiers answered correctly, instead posing a more difficult question.

Two or more players might be allowed to collaborate their efforts and thus participate as a team. Certain bonus games could be offered that are intended only for group participation where teams of players compete. The team selection may be by player choice, may be random, may be determined by game outcomes, or may be determined by which gaming machines.

## DETAIL DESCRIPTION

The following describes one possible embodiment of this invention.

A bank of 50 or more gaming machines are all linked together and connect to a bonus game controller. The bonus game is a quiz show (trivia) game with the database of a large number of questions and answers of various degrees of difficulty housed in the bonus game controller. The database can be updated in such a means as to keep the questions fresh and secure.

The gaming machines have a 5-reel multi-line spinning reel game. Displayed along side the edge of the screen is a bonus game ladder with prize amount displayed for each level on the ladder, progressively higher as you move up the ladder. The top position on the ladder is a progressive bonus pool with a dynamic prize amount provided by the bonus game controller. An indicum on the ladder indicates the current level for a given gaming machine. The indicium starts off at the bottom of the ladder.

On the first and last reels of the gaming machine are 'Logo' symbols representing the bonus game. The game has the following 9 paylines:

o o o o o	x x x x x	o o o o o	x x o o o	o o o x x
x x x x x	o o o o o	o o o o o	o o x o o	o o x o o
o o o o o	o o o o o	x x x x x	o o o x x	x x o o o
x o o o o	o o x x o	o o o o x	o x x o o	
o x o o x	o x o o x	x o o x o	x o o x o	

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o o X X o    X o o o o    o X X o o    o o o o X

The reels will not have 'Logo' symbols within 2 stops of each other and thus, by nature of the indicated paylines, any time two 'Logo' symbols appear, they will be on one and only one of the paylines.

If the player gets a game outcome with the 2 'Logo' symbols on a selected payline, he wins at chance at the bonus. A flowchart of the bonus game is shown in Figure 1. At that time, the gaming machine signals the controller which then adds an amount to the progressive bonus pool which, in turn, is reflected on each gaming machine's 'top of the ladder' prize. Typically, this is a fixed amount consistent with the odds of obtaining that game outcome. The controller then sends a question and 5 possible answers that are displayed to the player either on his game screen or on a separate bonus screen. The further up the ladder the indicium on that gaming machine is positioned, the more difficult the question.

He can answer the question, choose to take the prize for his current ladder position, or ignore/cancel the question. The player has 20 seconds in which to respond. If he answers the question correctly, he moves one rung up the ladder. If he answer incorrectly, he moves down one rung. If he takes the current award, that amount is removed from the bonus pool and paid to the player. If he ignores the question (lets it time out) or chooses to cancel the question, he remains at the same position on the ladder.

If a player reaches the top position on the ladder, he is awarded the bonus pool and all of the gaming machines' ladder indicia reset to the bottom of the ladder.

If a gaming machine is left with 0 credits for more than 5 minutes, the indicium will move down the ladder one increment every 5 minutes until it reaches the bottom.

The following describes another possible embodiment of this invention.

A bank of about 10 gaming machines are all linked together and connected to a bonus game controller with a large display (e.g. 42 inch plasma). The bonus game is a phrase guessing game similar to Wheel of Fortune. The game controller has a periodically updated database with of a large number of phrases.

Each letter has an associated number of points per the following table:

5 points : J Q V W X Y Z  
3 points: B C D F G H K L  
2 points: D M N P R S T  
1 point: A E I O U

As in WOF, the display board initially shows blank letter positions. It also has a 'BonusPool' meter that starts off at 0.

Each gaming machine has a video spinning reel game and a 'My Points' meter. If the player gets an outcome that includes a 'Your-Turn' symbol, 20 credits are added to the common 'BonusPool' meter and he may guess a letter for the puzzle. For each occurrence of the letter in the puzzle, the number of points associated with that letter is added to his 'MyPoints' meter and the letter appear in the appropriate spaces on the shared bonus game display. Some game outcomes may allow multiple guesses.

When the puzzle is completed, the player with the most points on his 'MyPoints' meter is awarded the bonus pool it is marked as 'awarded'.

When the next qualification outcome occurs, the bonus meter clears and a new puzzle appears.

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In an alternate version, the bonus game might offer multiple (e.g. 3) puzzles, each with its own 'BonusPool' meter. The player can then choose which puzzle to pursue on each guess. This could add to the continuity of the game as there would normally be some partially completed puzzles.

The following describes yet another possible embodiment of this invention.

A group of 20 or more gaming machines are all linked together and connect to a bonus game controller. The bonus game is a maze solving game we'll call "A-Mazing Cash".

The base game is a 9-reel (3x3 array) 8-line video slot with a touchscreen which includes a 'MazeRunner' symbol on each reel. If the player gets five or more 'MazeRunner' symbols, he qualifies for the next 'A-Mazing Cash' game. If he has already qualified, this outcome directly awards 50 credits. The player may have the option to drop his qualification and take 50 credits. Something like this may be needed to cover the condition of too few players to form a quorum or if a player wishes to leave.

When five gaming machines have qualified, the 'A-Mazing Cash' game starts. When all of the five qualified games have finished spinning, following a brief introduction/instruction presentation, a maze pattern is displayed on the screens of these five machines with the 'MazeRunner' character located in the lower left corner. The maze is the same on all five gaming machines but is different for each bonus game. Typically the maze is algorithmically designed but it could come from a database. The destination is the upper right corner. The player places his finger on the 'MazeRunner' and drags him through the maze. The first player to complete the maze is awarded 300 credits.

The system may or may not include a large overhead display on which other people can monitor the progress of the game.

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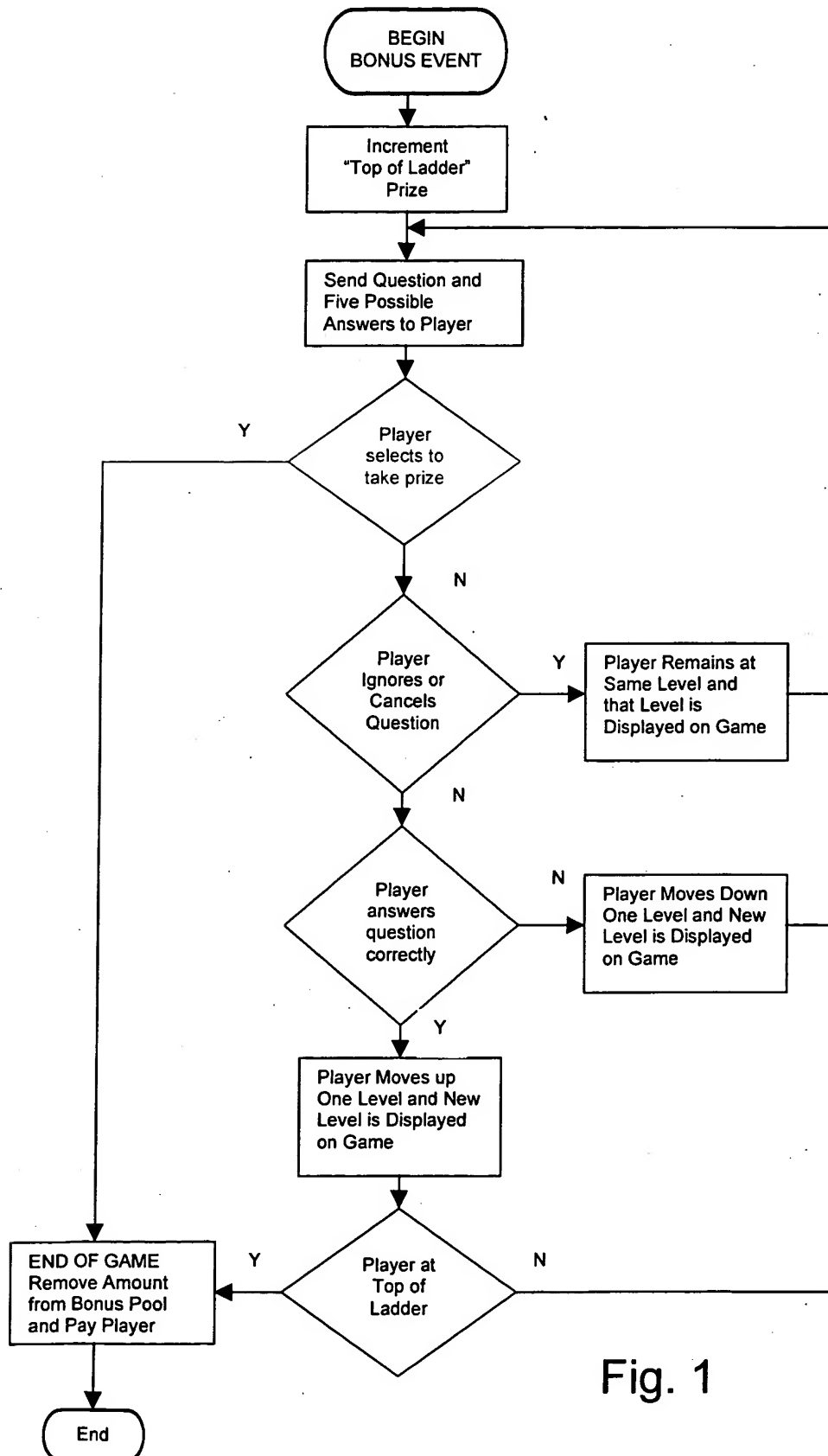


Fig. 1

## 2. INFORMATION CONCERNING CONCEPTION OF INVENTION

### 2.1 Conception and documentation of the invention

- 2.1.1 Identify the date when you first conceived the invention. - REDACTED Voyage I - Concept X
- 2.1.2 To who was the idea first described and on what date? (Other than a co-inventor.) John Vallejo, Don DuPurault, Jane Gannon, John Philip, Alan Williams, Joe Walkowski
- 2.1.3 Identify the date of the first tangible record such as computer simulation, tape out, drawing or written description. Please specify type and location. Written Description, REDACTED Sunset Station & Casino, Las Vegas, NV.

### 2.2 Conception of the invention

- 2.2.1 Please identify related invention disclosures, patents or other publications describing similar ideas, and other companies working in the same field. Attach copies, if available.
- 2.2.2 What is the closest technology, of which you are aware?

#### Other

Innovation Workshop, REDACTED, Las Vegas NV, Sections: 2.4, 2.7, G, P, Y

- 2.2.3 Identify the advantages of this invention over previous technology.

See 1.0 above

### 2.3 Important dates

- 2.3.1 Has invention been disclosed outside the company? No
- 2.3.2 Has any product using the invention been sold or offered for sale? If yes, to whom and on what date? N/A

### 2.4 Disposition of the invention

- 2.4.1 When will (or did) (name of company division) begin use of the invention experimentally? TBD
- 2.4.2 When will (or did) (name of company division) begin production of this invention? TBD

### 2.5. Miscellaneous Information

- 2.5.1 Was the invention developed during a joint development agreement or other contract with an outside company? No
- 2.5.2 Please list developmental work outside of the company. None

### 3. INVENTORS

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Supervisor:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date

4. DATE FORM COMPLETED \_\_\_\_\_

### COMMENTS

We would like to cover as fully as we can the notion of a competitive skill based game as a bonus game shared among multiple linked gaming machines. Especially where the awards are from a pool that is dominantly built from the outcomes on the individual gaming machines so that the house has no major stake in the player's skill levels.

A recently issued patent is related to skill games but does not have the competitive linked nature or the house independence. In this patent 6,193,606 by Walker Digital LLC, the player is presented Trivia questions while the reels are spinning. He must answer correctly before the reels stop. If he has answered correctly and the game outcome is a winner, he is paid a higher amount than if he failed to answer correctly.

*Betty V: Looks like if this one flies that there may be some Continuations filed. I particularly like the 4th paragraph on page 4 where if a gaming machine is left w/0 credits for more than 5 minutes, the indicia will move down the ladder one increment every 5 minutes until it reaches the bottom. Allows for passersby to "look for a game that hasn't hit bottom yet".*

*This could be implemented over a WAN such as a Wide-Area Progressive with casinos all over competing/participating.*